

**HE MEANS IT AS HE'S MEANT IT**  
Brother Bird II

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Our peculiar Brother Bird  
Had been diggin' even deeper  
In the treasures of the Word,

And was surer more than ever  
Of the teaching he had spread  
Of destruction of the wicked  
At the judgment of the dead.

When a scholar of the Sandhills  
From the seminary came;  
A professor, "Dr. Brimstone" -  
"Farren Brimstone" was his name.

And he came as a contender  
For the credos of the past -  
To defend endangered dogmas  
Was the dogged doctor's task.

And a half o' dozen letters  
Trailing right beside his name,  
On a published dissertation  
Was his pompous claim to fame.

And he mocked the simple reading  
Of the words within the Word,  
And condemned the crude credentials  
Of our lowly Brother Bird.

And he lauded old confessions,  
As he chided doctrines "new",  
And he quoted Greek and Hebrew,  
Or at least pretended to.

In command of several cliché's,  
And control of ancient lore,  
And in charge of seven proof-texts,  
He made quick work of his chore.

And he challenged all the "notions"  
Of peculiar Brother Bird,  
And he said, "This view on *burn up*  
Is most patently absurd!"

Brother Bird then asked the Doctor  
The word *perish* to define,  
And to use it in a sentence -  
"Well Sir, if you wouldn't mind."

Then the Doctor stu-stu-stuttered  
As he tried to answer Bird -  
"Pu-Pu-Perish only means...uh -  
(It's a very tricky word)-

"And it du-du-doesn't always  
Have to mu-mu-mean "to die;"  
It can mean "be lost" or "ruined"  
As the scholars verify.

"And I guess you surely know it  
Can be fi-fi-figur'tive;  
As in "endless conscious torment  
In which lost men ever live."

"*Ever* live? As in *for ever*?"  
Brother Bird then asked the Doc-  
"Ever *live*?" as in *existin'*  
Why it seems you mean to mock.

"That's the OPPOSITE of *perish*-  
And if truly "figur'tive,"  
It's not true to any figure  
To say *dyin'* means to *live*.

"And moreover," said our Brother,  
"If you read its constant use  
Through the length and breadth of Scripture,  
You will be without excuse.

"For it says, 'THE WICKED PERISH'-  
*Into smoke* they do *consume*-  
And it says of 'them that perish'  
That *destruction* is their doom.

"If God says, 'The wicked *perish*,'  
Then I say they surely do,  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through!

"For it's used of *war* and *famine*.  
And of *dust* and *death* and *dearth*,  
And of being *brought to nothing*,  
And *destroyed from off the earth*.

"Of *consumption* and of *fever*  
And of *dung* and *smoke* and *end*,  
And of *cut down* and of *cut off*,  
And of *beasts* and *wicked men*.

"And it's paralleled with *vanish*,  
And with *withereth* and *slay*,  
And it's linked with *being eat up*,  
And with *die* and *fade away*.

"And it's used in clear distinction  
To the term *eternal life*,  
And in contrast to *endurin'*,  
And *remainin'* and *abide*.

"The Divine Vocabulary  
Has thus used it o'er and o'er,  
In Its built-in Dictionary  
Of one-hundred fifty-four.

"Yes, one hundred fifty four times  
You will find it used, my friend,  
And it *never* means a process  
That will never have an end.

"But God gives *life everlasting*  
To all those who are in Christ-  
It is *these* who NEVER PERISH  
Who receive *eternal life*.

"Would we charge the Scripture's Author  
With such clumsiness of words?  
The Creator of all language  
With incompetence? Absurd!

"If God says, 'the wicked *perish*,'  
Then I say they surely do,  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through!

Then the disconcerted Doctor  
Interrupted Brother Bird  
"You are overlooking several  
Abstract uses of the word.

"Such as *bottles* that are broken,  
But that do not cease to be,  
And of missing *sheep* and *coins*-  
Well now, *that* should help you see!"

"Yes, it helps me see so clearly  
That all uses of the word  
Never speak of endless torment,  
And its meaning is not blurred.

"For those bottles that were broken-  
Those burst wineskins-don't you trust,  
Do most justly picture *perish*,  
For they've surely turned to dust.

"And the lost sheep and the coins  
Aptly pictures souls as LOST,  
And the *life lost* means to *perish*,  
Which is sin's great final cost."

Farren Brimstone, by then steaming,  
Cited each and ev'ry creed,  
From the first church to Westminster,  
"And all Christians have agreed!"

"The ma-jor-i-ty, *yes*," Bird said,  
"But, no, *not* the early church -  
And dissenters through the ages  
Bore the fruit of honest search.

"But the truth can't be invented,  
It just *is*, and that is that -  
And majority opinion  
Never made the round earth flat.

"We must humbly read and study  
To find out what we should know;  
We must nobly search the Scriptures  
And to see if things are so.

"As Arnobius and Clement,  
Guillebaud and Leroy Froom-  
Who became convinced from Scripture  
Of the fire that will consume.

"Dear John Wenham faced it squarely,  
Pastor Dale his stance confessed;  
Joseph Parker saw it fairly,  
And John Stott this truth professed.

"Henry Constable was cogent;  
Basil Atkinson discreet;  
Edward White was so convincing,  
And John Pettingell complete.

"Bishop Whately wouldn't kowtow;  
Samuel Minton wouldn't budge;  
And we all should be so grateful  
For the work of Edward Fudge.

"These and many others like 'em,  
Who have loved and searched the Word,  
Have been logical and lucid,  
And should finally be heard!

"If the wicked truly perish,  
Or if endless torment's true,  
Neither you nor I can change it-  
There is nothing we can do.

"And God says, 'the wicked *perish*,'  
Then I say they surely do,  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through!

And just then the highbrow doctor  
Quite offended and perturbed,  
Shook the dust from off his sandals  
And was done with Brother Bird.

But before the dust had settled  
In came fiery Sister Smoke,  
And encouraged Brother Bird to  
Be more careful how he spoke.

"For you overlook God's judgment  
And His wrath," said she to him,  
"And your sentimental longings  
Make your sense of justice dim.

"Yet you feign you know the meaning  
Of each Greek and English word,"  
And that fiery Smoke of torment  
Nearly burned up Brother Bird.

For she thundered as she wondered  
Of the sense o this and that;  
And he wondered as she thundered,  
Was it all just tit for tat?

But amid the rank and rankle,  
Sister Smoke did yet confess,  
She was not prepared to argue  
For the point she did profess.

Brother Bird by then was puzzled-  
If she had not searched it out,  
Why she spoke of all those "red flags"  
That had filled her mind with doubt?

Did she look up every Scripture?  
Did she read just what it said?  
Or just judge the poem's author  
And not ponder what she read?

Was her problem with the poem,  
Or just really with the poet?  
If his points were truly valid,  
Would she have the heart to know it?

Is it 'sentimental longings'  
To reject perpetual wrath?  
And would 'justice' be neglected  
If Christ *burns up* all the chaff?

Does she wonder of the purpose  
Of grim torment without end,  
Since it won't reform the sinner,  
And it can't destroy the sin?

Such a god would be a monster -  
Not the Lord we know and love;  
Not the maker of the flowers,  
Or Creator of the dove.

Brother Bird became determined,  
Pacing briskly as he spoke,  
And he opened up his Bible,  
And he summoned Sister Smoke.

And he showed her clear examples  
Of God's judgment in the Word,  
But she cried out, "They were *temporal!*"  
And his point she hardly heard.

For his point was that the wording  
Used of temporal wrath-the sum-  
Is exactly *the same language*  
That describes the wrath to come.

"Whether Sodom and Gomorrah  
Or the judgment of the flood  
Or of those who died with Korah,  
Or the Galilean's blood.

"All the Scriptures say such PERISHED,  
Were DESTROYED or were CONSUMED,  
And the *same words* draw the picture  
Of the sinner's final doom.

"If you don't repent," said Jesus,  
'You shall *likewise perish*, too' -  
And we see how Christ meant *perish*,  
And the *likewise* is a clue."

And he emphasized the *perish* -  
"Yes Ma'am, *perish* I have read!"  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

"Would we charge the Scripture's Author  
With such clumsiness of words?  
The Creator of all language  
With incompetence? Absurd?"

"If God says, 'the wicked *perish*,'  
Then I say they surely do,  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through!

Sister Smoke then turned quite ashen,  
As she nearly lost her breath,  
Yet she smoldered one last question  
Of just what was meant by "death."

“Isn't death just *separation*  
Of the body and the soul -  
To be *shut out* from God's presence  
While the endless ages roll?”

“That's the premise,” Brother Bird said,  
“Of the endless torment folks,  
As if bodies are the egg shells,  
And the souls immortal yolks.

“But when God told father Adam  
How that he would surely die,  
And the serpent said he wouldn't -  
Well, we know who told the lie.

“Dust thou art-to dust returnest,”  
Is how God explained it then;  
Thus by one man sin had entered,  
And then *death* passed to all men.

“And we know *death* is the wages  
And of sin the penalty,  
But God's gift is life eternal -  
Yes, to *live* eternally!

“And the lost shall one day *perish* -  
Not just bodies, but the whole;  
For we know God can *destroy*  
Both the body and the soul.

“Can destroy both soul and body -  
Can destroy them *both*, he saith;  
Thus the lake of fire is rightly  
Called by God “the second *death*.”

“Thus we learn the Scripture's meaning  
That in death life has an END -  
*Loss of life* - not life in torment  
Is its meaning, my dear friend.

“And this penalty was pictured  
In the sacrifices plain,  
At the tabernacle altar  
Where the animals were *slain*.

“For the sheep were not imprisoned,  
And tormented endlessly,  
And the oxen were not tortured  
Or confined in misery.

“God's consistent jurisprudence  
Points to this important truth,  
That the *life* for life was taken -  
Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

“All transgressions under Moses  
A *just* recompense received,  
And the *loss of life* was harshest -  
Yes, the harshest one conceived.

“And, in fact there were no prisons  
In the land of Is-ra-el,  
And no ghastly torture chambers  
Like an endless-torment hell.

“And the Biblical expressions  
Of atonement full and free  
Are 'Christ *died* for the ungodly,'  
And 'who gave himself for me.'

“For sin's penalty was conquered  
Through the blood for sinners shed,  
When Christ tasted DEATH for all men,  
And then rose up from the dead.

“And although He greatly suffered  
All the way to Calvary,  
'Twas His *death* that brought redemption,  
And that paid the penalty.

“And our Lord spoke of His own death  
Of His death upon the tree,  
When He said His *life* He giveth;  
Yes, 'I lay it down,' said He.

“This coherent testimony  
To the penalty of sin  
Shows that *perish* means - yes, *perish*,  
And not torment without end.

“If God says the wicked *perish*,  
Then I say they surely do,  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through.

“Would we charge the Scripture's Author  
With such clumsiness of words?  
The Creator of all language  
With incompetence? Absurd!”

And she contemplated *perish* -  
“Yes, it's *perish* I have read,  
And it seems that you have shown me  
What the Bible clearly said.”

Sister Smoke had truly listened,  
And in some points had concurred,  
And it seemed she even kindly  
Bid farewell to Brother Bird.

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Brother Bird began to tire,  
And was weary from the Smoke and  
From the Farren Brimstone ire.

When a young man with a Bible  
Came to make our Brother glad -  
Yes, a youth for truth so hungry  
By the name of Ernest Ladd.

Ernest Ladd was not a scholar,  
But he had a habit true -  
For he read his Bible often  
And had read his Bible through.

Thus familiar with the wording  
Of the words within the Word,  
He had ears to hear the teaching  
Of peculiar Brother Bird.

And he read his Bible over,  
And he read it carefully;  
And he said, “This 'Burn Up' Doctrine'  
Sure sounds Biblical to me.”

And he analyzed *destruction*,  
And investigated *death*,  
And he scrutinized *consumption*,  
And the *spirit, life and breath*.

And he found that all the “proof-texts,”  
(For he took the time to read),  
Did not say what most were claimin'  
In the endless-torment creed.

He conversed with Doctor Brimstone  
And with Sister Smoke conferred,  
And examined all the writings,  
Poems and charts of Brother Bird.

And he came up through the hollers,  
And he climbed up o'er the knolls,  
To discuss the Scripture's wording,  
And di-sect immortal souls.

Brother Bird and he would gather  
With a Bible in each lap,  
And would search with a Concordance  
As if scouring o'er a map.

And they'd read each pertinent Scripture,  
And consider what it said,  
And get more and more delighted  
With each passage that they read.

And the Ladd was such a blessing,  
But he could not figure out  
Why so many could not see it,  
When to him there was no doubt.

For he'd plainly pondered *perish*,  
And had found its meaning plain,  
And he couldn't reconcile it  
With eternal conscious pain.

So he emphasized the *perish* -  
"Indeed, *perish* I have read,"  
And he said it was just purely  
What the Scriptures plainly said.

"Since God says the wicked *perish*,  
Then I'd say it must be true,  
And He surely must have meant it  
As He's used it through and through."

Brother Bird's blue eyes then twinkled,  
As he stroked his whiskered chin:  
"This old mountain man's so thankful  
To have met you, my young friend."

And he was by then so hopeful  
Ernest Ladd would come to be  
A most passionate promoter  
Of the truths he'd come to see.

But folks said the Ladd was "smitten  
With the venom of the Bird,"  
And had fatally been bitten  
By "this teaching most absurd."

And they'd say "This is so *vital*"  
When in hunt for heresy,  
But when cornered by the Scripture,  
"It don't matter much to me."

Thus he slowly got discouraged,  
And disheartened and dismayed,  
As he lost his zeal to quarrel  
In his efforts to persuade.

Brother Bird was yet persistent  
In the truth he did pursue,  
And was equally insistent  
That their efforts they renew.

And he said, "It is so *vital*  
To please *God* instead of self,  
And to share this truth with others,  
And not hide it on the shelf.

"For our Father's not a monster,  
And His love our hearts has won,  
And we've met Him in the Scriptures,  
And we've seen Him in the Son.

"And how could our God so holy  
Author such a thing so bad?  
And why would our Lord so lovely  
Be eternally so mad?"

"If folks call that 'sentimental,'  
Or a 'softening toward sin,'  
Their own ghastly view of torment  
They must little comprehend.

"From His own clear testimony  
God has promised us that He  
Will not always keep His anger -  
Will not always angry be!"

"It's a noun and not a verb in  
'Everlasting punishment' -  
And the punishment's not torment,  
But DESTRUCTION, it is writ!"

"Yes, God poureth out His anger  
On the 'great and dreadful day,'  
But it only lasts a *moment*,  
While His mercy is for aye."

And he kept on quoting Scriptures,  
And with Scriptures he did prod  
Brother Ernest not to falter  
For the love of our good God.

"*Life in Christ* is our great gospel -  
*Death in Sin* our grave refrain;  
And in faithfulness to Scripture  
We must dare to make it plain!"

"And the reason few have bothered?  
And the reason few have dared?  
It is APATHY, my brother -  
It's because so few have *cared!*"

"And of course we should be prudent  
And not pester or annoy,  
But not treat this as a trifle,  
Or dismiss it as a toy.

"For we need persuaded Sisters  
Who were skeptical at first,  
And we need more Ernest Ladds who  
For the truths of Scriptures thirst.

"Yes, we need discerning brothers  
Who are careful with their words,  
Oh, but humor me, my brother -  
We sure need some noisy Birds

"To keep emphasizing PERISH,  
'Yes, it's *perish* we have read!'  
And to say "It is just simply  
What the Bible clearly said!"

"Yes, God says, 'THE WICKED PERISH.'  
So let's say, 'They surely do.'  
And He means it as He's meant it  
As He's used it through and through."

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Our peculiar Brother Bird  
Is still hoping that a host of  
Ernest Ladds will soon be heard.